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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES
AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS, SYDNEY.

Choice apples sell at firm rates.

Supplies of apples were relatively light during the first week of the month and values were very firm. Demand for both local and interstate Jonathans was active and the ceiling rate of 27/- per bushel was paid for selected sizes. Local Delicious were scarce but Tasmanian packs were available; all sizes were quoted at 27/-. The small quantities of Granny Smiths on offer met a ready sale.

Other varieties available chiefly comprised Tasmanian Worcester Pearmain, Cox's Orange Pippin, Cleopatra, Alfriston, Duke of Clarence and Ribston Pippin. Rates varied but none exceeded 20/-.

On 9th April trading in apples was brought practically to a standstill so far as the retail trade was concerned. This was occasioned by a ban on purchases imposed by the Retail Fruit and Vegetable Association on its members in an endeavour to bring about an adjustment of certain anomalies. This applied particularly as regards the weight of contents of some packs which it was claimed did not contain the requisite 40 lbs. of fruit adopted by the Prices Branch as a basis for fixing maximum prices. The ban was lifted on 16th April after the Minister for Agriculture stated that he would call a conference of interested parties. The conference was held on 19th April and a line of procedure was adopted which it was hoped would adjust the various difficulties at present being laboured under. Trading was brisk during the balance of the month. Prices showed some variations, e.g., Tasmanian Jonathans were cheaper at 17/- to 26/- for fancy and 15/- to 24/- for good grade packs. Cleopatras advanced in price and were quoted at 20/- to 25/-. Some Tasmanian Crofton, Democrat, Geevston Fanny, Scarlet Pearmain and Newton Pippin were forward but rates for all varieties mentioned were below the ceiling level of 27/-. Consignments of Victorian and South Australian Jonathans were received and limited quantities of Granny Smiths. Supplies of Rome Beauty were more plentiful towards the close of the month and best sizes were selling at 27/-.

Demand for pears cases.

The principal consignments of pears were received from Victoria and only small quantities of local and Tasmanian packs were forward. During the period of the retailers' ban on apples the demand was brisk and the maximum of 28/- per case was obtained for both Packham's Triumph and Winter Coles from local and Victorian sources. Subsequently there was a slackening in request and values were easier. The Tasmanian Winter Coles were available at from 20/- to 27/- per bushel. Other varieties on offer comprised Howells, Glou. Morceau and Beurre Bosc. Rates for these lines were lower than those ruling for Packham's Triumph and Coles.

New season's Navel oranges available.

Only very small quantities of Valencia oranges were available and prompt clearances were effected at maximum levels. Marketing of Coastal Navels and Silettas commenced towards the close of the month, but the bulk of offerings lacked maturity. In a number of instances the fruit was devoid of colour and some lines were withheld from sale.

Despite the condition of the fruit, there was a ready sale for most lines until Friday, 27th April, when demand eased appreciably owing to the prospect of a considerable reduction in the ceiling rate on 1st May, and stocks could not be cleared. On Monday, 30th April, the new maximum price of 16/- per bushel was announced, representing a reduction of 7/- per case.

Request for Coastal lemons quieter.

Inquiry for lemons from Coastal districts was only moderate and values, except for choice coloured fruit, had an easier trend. Consignments of Queensland lemons, which were mostly well coloured, met a good demand and most lines realised maximum prices.

Bananas in short supply.

Supplies of bananas were light and insufficient to fulfil trade requirements. All sizes realised the top rate of 7d per lb.

Satisfactory demand for grapes.

Small quantities of black Muscatel grapes were obtainable early in the month and choice packs sold to 30/- per half-case. Supplies of Cornichon, Doradillo and Waltham Cross from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, however, were fairly plentiful. Demand generally was satisfactory and prices were maintained at remunerative levels.

Market for pineapples firm.

A heavy consignment of pineapples, totalling more than 8,000 cases, was available on Tuesday, 3rd April, and this constituted the largest quantity on offer for some time. Demand was moderate but the ceiling rate of 21/3 could only be obtained for a small percentage. The presence of "blister" in some packs affected sales during the first two weeks and some lines had to be sold at comparatively low prices. During the latter half of April the market showed improvement owing to lighter supplies and the bulk of sales was effected at 21/3 per case.

Values of passionfruit easier.

Demand for the slightly larger supplies of passionfruit was somewhat restricted and rates eased.

Other fruits.

Consignments of papaws were only moderate and choice lines sold to 35/- per case. There was a considerable increase in supplies of custard apples, over 1,000 half-cases arriving on the last day of the month. Prices declined as supplies increased.

Vegetables plentiful and cheaper.

Supplies of vegetables were considerably heavier than during the corresponding month last year, especially peas, cabbages, cauliflowers and, at times, beans. This resulted in reduced prices compared with those ruling in April, 1944.

Peas plentiful and cheaper.

Consignments of peas were very heavy almost daily, and on a number of occasions over 4,000 bags were on offer. The quantities available were considerably in excess of trade requirements and a considerable proportion had to be sold to canners who paid 5/- per bushel for purchases up till the closing week when this rate was reduced to 4/- per bushel.

In April of last year, choice peas realised 21/- per bushel on practically all sale days but values this year have been well below the figure mentioned, rates for choice quality offerings mostly being around 8/- to 10/- per bushel. Only on one occasion did the price reach 18/- per bushel.

Bean market weak.

Large supplies of beans were also received. Demand in the main centred on choice quality lines which sold to 7/- per bushel and occasionally 10/-. Medium to lower grade descriptions, however, were difficult to sell although offered at very low prices, and those lines represented the greater proportion of carry-over stocks. These unsold lots, added to fresh consignments, created gluts and the assistance of the Department of Food Supply had to be sought on two occasions to clear floors. Supplies coming on to agents' stands at the close of the month were approximating 1,000 bags daily and in addition further quantities were available in the growers' section.

Tomatoes plentiful - values easier.

The heavy stocks of tomatoes on hand during the first week of the period were reduced considerably by disposals to factories of large quantities of mature fruit and during the

second week the market recovered, the maximum rate of 14/- being obtained for choice locals. However, the receipt of heavier consignments subsequently from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, other inland centres, Metropolitan and Victorian sources resulted in a decline in values, particularly for medium quality and lines forward in maturity. Victorian supplies had to be sold at low prices. At closing, rates for Metropolitan packs ranged to 10/-, while 12/- was obtained for a small quantity of extra choice. Inland lots sold to 7/-, only occasional specials realising more. A small consignment of Southern Queensland fruit reached the market and it was expected that regular and increasing supplies would come forward during May.

Larger supplies of cauliflowers.

There was a marked increase in consignments of cauliflowers from growing areas around Bathurst and also from Metropolitan sources. On a few days receipts exceeded 200 tons. Despite the large quantities on offer, clearances generally were satisfactory at prices which were lower but which should be payable to growers.

Cabbages sell at lower prices.

The plentiful supplies of peas, beans and cauliflowers had a depressing effect on the demand for cabbages with the result that values were weak. On some days it was difficult to obtain 6/- per dozen for choice large "heads" and lower grade lines could not be cleared. On occasions when supplies were limited, values ranged to 8/-, while a few sales were recorded at 10/- per dozen. High prices were obtained during the corresponding month last year when as much as 24/- per dozen was realised. This was accounted for largely by droughty conditions and limited supplies of other greens.

Supplies of root vegetables increase.

Carrots, parsnips and swede turnips were in much heavier supply towards the close of the month, and rates eased.

(R.D. Meaker).